

**T**he last day of the GIS conference will always be a day to remember — February 11, 2011 or 2/11. It was in the afternoon when I read a posting on my cell phone that the Egyptian “President,” Mubarak, had stepped down.

As you can already tell, this is neither my typical technical column nor the typical GIS conference in review article. I hope you’ll bear with me.

For many, including myself, the days of protest leading up to that Friday in Egypt did not really resonate, and even after the resignation we moved on with our daily lives. However, from traveling the world the last 20 years (including the Middle East) I know what a huge day 2/11 was for much of the world.

One of the great impressions of people that I have come in contact with, especially those associated with golf and teaching around the world and especially in developing countries, is how little we differ in our day-to-day lives. At universities we talk about the same things and joke about the same things (even governments) whether a language barrier exists or not. International students aren’t much different than our own; they are enthusiastic, curious, have a degree of naivety and want a meaningful career and a good job.

I know I’m generalizing, but as a group, golf course superintendents around the world tend to dress alike, talk alike, similarly find their career rewarding, and they even enjoy similar things. On golf courses you find similar equipment and supplies, as we would find here, along with similar golfer expectations. Many of you have experienced that whether talking turf on the GIS trade show or at receptions with international colleagues.

They also have similar worries. I remember being at lunch in China with a golf course developer and an owner of a turf supply company and the conversation centered on something called “Black Tuesday,” a day in July when the kids learn what college they qualify for... not much different than our college admissions here in the States.

The interesting thing was this conversation

## A Day to Remember

BY KARL DANNEBERGER



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OR THE COUNTRY-  
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was at the end of March 2001, during the time an American spy plane collided with a Chinese jet fighter that resulted in the Chinese pilot being killed and the American crew of 24 being detained after making an emergency landing on China’s Hainan Island. Sometimes government crisis seem so far away whether you are in hometown USA or the countryside of China.

From my travels I have been known to make off-handed remarks like “the world is all the same from the 20th floor of the Marriott” or “the first tee is the same no matter what country you are in.”

But the truth is, the world is very different from country to country from the 20th floor of the Marriott when it comes to one thing: democracy. You might not be able to spot it from a hotel window, but its presence cannot be understated.

Democracy, especially among the young, is associated with opportunity... a better life for oneself and family... and I am not sure how to word it but it is also associated with human dignity.

Seeing the news that day on my cell phone made me, for a minute, stop and forget all about the GIS. What I was reading on my cell phone right then was important to the world.

What we saw in Egypt, and who knows how it will play out, was the repudiation of ideas and philosophies of the people who instigated and supported 9/11. For me it was a humbling experience to watch the Egyptian people put their lives on the line in a non-violent protest for democracy. How could it not make one feel proud to be an American?

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